

REMARKS

Claims 16, 17 and 19-33 were rejected under 35 USC 112, first paragraph, for the reasons of record. Independent claims 16 and 30 have been amended in such a manner as to render this rejection moot. Both of these independent claims now further include a recitation of an "interface to the Internet", support for which can be clearly found in at least Figure 1.

All of the pending claims are variously rejected under 35 USC 103(a) based on combinations of Eizenburg et al., Tso and Stanfield, which were previously cited and applied by the Examiner, and now further in view of Floss et al. (US 2002/0147619).

The arguments made previously with regard to Eizenburg et al., Tso and Stanfield are repeated, and incorporated by reference.

The Applicant continues to disagree with the Examiner's use of Stanfield (e.g., paragraph 0022) for rejecting the claims. It is again pointed out that the disclosure of Stanfield states only:

"The electronic reservation referral-system and method of the present invention is well suited for conventions, trade shows and professional meetings. The electronic reservation referral system and method can send interactive emails to potential attendees well in advance of an event, allowing them to make the appropriate reservations for the event, hotel accommodations, flights, etc. In addition to helping organizers promote their event, the electronic reservation referral system and method can help organizers forecast attendance; reserve the appropriate meeting space, market conference materials, etc. Professional organizations can use the electronic reservation referral-system of the present invention to **conduct important pre-conference business, such as votes or polls**, as well as to attract new members from lists of names and emails supplied by existing members. The present system will also reduce costs for event support staff and logistics."

It is once more pointed out that these "votes or polls" are not related to travel *per se*, but are instead related to the convention, trade show and professional meeting that is the purpose of the

trip. The fact that "votes or polls" are mentioned in the context of the "electronic reservation referral system and method" does not change the fact that there is no express disclosure or suggestion of an aspect of the present invention.

More specifically, these "votes or polls" are not "related to travel arrangements" as stated by the Examiner in the most recent office action. All that Stanfield discloses is that professional organizations "can use the electronic reservation referral-system of the present invention to conduct important pre-conference business, such as votes or polls". There is no suggestion that these "votes or polls" are connected in any way with "travel arrangements" *per se*. As such, and even if Stanfield were combined with Eizenburg et al. and Tso (which is not admitted is suggested), the resulting combination would still lack an express disclosure or suggestion of using a tool that enables trip participants to vote on a matter related to travel arrangements.

Each of the independent claims 1, 7, 16 and 30 were previously amended to include a recitation of:

"where one of said tools enables trip participants to vote on at least one of trip destination and trip dates" (claims 1, 7, 16); or

as in claim 30:

"further comprising a tool configured to enable trip participants to electronically vote on at least one of trip destination and trip dates."

The Examiner admits that Stanfield does not explicitly teach that the "matters involved are at least of trip destination or trip dates", but has now cited Floss et al. (Abstract) for purportedly teaching this subject matter. The Applicant respectfully disagrees.

The Abstract of Floss et al. states:

A method and system for providing personal travel advice to a user is provided.

The method and system includes a profiling engine that prepares a personalized profile for a particular user by gathering **user-specific data regarding an individual's likes, dislikes, lifestyle, interests, activities and budget for the vacation. Several profiles for members of a group travelling together can be combined to obtain recommendations for the group.** An advice engine combines information from various expert knowledge bases to provide recommended travel destinations. The profiles may also be used to check a destination for its appropriateness, and to request a similar destination to one enjoyed previously by the individual or the group.

Reference can also be made to paragraphs [0058] through [0060]:

[0058] This information is combined and prepared as shown in greater detail in the chart 1100 of FIG. 11. Initially, profiles are assembled in block 1102. **Multiple profiles are assembled into a single combined profile.** The profile of a first individual is shown in block 1104, and it is combined with the profiles of other persons also traveling on this particular vacation, as shown in blocks 1106 and 1108. Each individual such as the individual profile 1104 has a lifestyle (L) rating, desired activities (A), and interests (I) as shown in blocks 1104a, b and c. **The profiles 1104, 1106 and 1108 are assembled into a combined profile 1110.** The combined profile includes a combination of the profile elements based on expert profile rules as shown in block 1112.

[0059] Various situations are taken into account in the assembly step, such as whether a particular item or an interest is rated versus not rated by the individuals. A high rating versus a low rating of a particular activity or interest is taken into account. A high/low rating versus a "not me" rating is also factored into the combination. For example, a "not me" rating may rule that particular item out for the group. Lifestyle rules are factored in (e.g., mountain climbing would not be recommended for infants and small children), and there is a weighting for multiple matching. In particular, if a number of parties indicated an interest in beaches then oceanfront destinations would receive a higher score than, for example, a woodland destination.

[0060] The next step, shown in block 1120, is to **assemble the combined profiles and the request.** The request includes lifestyle (L), activities (A), interests (I) and budget (B) at the particular destinations. These are assembled and combined, as shown in step 1120. **The combined profile 1110 is added to the request 1220 to develop a scoring profile 1124. The scoring profile 1124 is derived using the weighting factors for each element. The next step is to remove influence or accentuate influence of each characteristic. A standard weighting applies, depending on the original profile rating if an activity or interest is not specified in the request, as illustrated in block 1128.**

Clearly, there is no suggestion or disclosure of "making at least travel arrangements related to the trip by using tools provided to the potential trip participants at the trip homepage, **where one of said tools enables trip participants to vote on at least one of trip destination and trip dates**, as is recited in, for example, claim 1. The disclosure of Floss et al. is directed instead to combining various user profiles using some type of "expert" system to make destination suggestions or recommendations. The word "vote" does not appear in Floss et al., and neither does the word "poll".

There is no suggestion seen in the disclosure of profiles in Floss et al., and the combining of profiles, that any type of voting or analogous procedure is occurring. Instead, the goal of Floss et al. appears to be the suggestion of vacation destinations with associated rankings (e.g., see paragraphs [0065] and [0066] where it is stated that using "all of these scores, the best option with personalized details is produced by the advice engine as shown in block 950 of FIG. 9....In addition to developing a list of vacation destinations that are recommended and associated rankings, the profiles and requests can be mapped onto a particular destination to determine whether that destination fits within an individual's profile and request.") Clearly, Floss et al. do not expressly disclose or suggest the use of a tool or tools that enables "**trip participants to vote on at least one of trip destination and trip dates**".

As such, even if the teachings of Floss et al. were to be combined with the teachings of Eizenburg et al., Tso and Stanfield (which is not admitted is suggested), the resulting combination of teachings would still be devoid of an express teaching, or a suggestion, of making at least travel arrangements related to the trip by using tools provided to the potential trip participants at the trip homepage, "where one of said tools enables trip participants to vote on at least one of trip destination and trip dates".

The independent claims of this patent application are clearly in condition for allowance over the various combinations of references cited and applied by the Examiner. In that all of the independent claims are allowable, then all of the dependent claims are allowable as well, for at least this one reason alone, whether or not the additional disclosures of the SODA '99 Form,

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Walker et al. and/or Vogt et al. are also considered.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and remove the rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), and to allow all of the pending claims as now presented for examination. An early notification of the allowability of all of the pending claims is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted:


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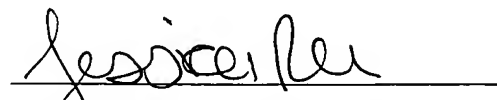
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